

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE C-16

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
4 February 1987

Changing the CIA guard

There may be controversy about William Casey's record as CIA director. But there should be none about his departure. He deserves the nation's sympathy as he struggles to recover from major brain surgery.

The CIA's No. 2 man, Robert Gates, is almost certain to be confirmed as the new director. If he's smart (and the evidence so far says he is), he'll learn the lessons of Casey's mixed-bag record.

On the plus side, Casey took over an agency in 1981 that was shell-shocked from the public criticism and budget cuts of the Ford-Carter years. Casey won congressional support for increased funding, restored morale and made the organization a strong voice again in White House policy-making circles.

But under Casey, the CIA drifted back into many of the mistakes that got it in hot water during the '70s. There was too little emphasis on intelligence gathering, too much on "black bag" covert missions. CIA spooks waded eagerly into Central America—and embarrassed themselves and the nation with blunders like mining a Nicaraguan harbor. The CIA's role in the Iran-Contra arms deal is still unclear, but it hardly covers the outfit with glory.

A Gates now will have an opportunity to make the CIA what it should be: An agency that gathers information aggressively, analyzes it wisely. And runs covert operations that are well targeted and tightly controlled.